

Preface

As a believer in both science and spirituality, I know that energy takes myriad forms. In fact, I see science and spirituality as often saying similar things, just in different ways. But the science books and I diverge: I don't limit myself exclusively to them—to accepting as possible only what our current technologies can perceive. Just as ultraviolet rays and microorganisms existed well before we developed the proper tools to see them, I believe that there is still so much more out there than meets our modern eyes and minds. Who am I to limit nature's abilities—or our means of understanding them?

This is the mind-set with which I greeted Rebecca's astrology presentation during a conference on the evolution of consciousness in 2012. Previously, I had never thought much about astrology. Sure, I knew my sun (birth) sign (Sagittarius) and had flipped through some horoscopes, but beyond basic pop culture it had not substantially entered my purview. So I was surprised that her talk had such an impact on me. But it did! And I believe it did because Rebecca explained the stars in the same vein that I understand—in my work as a holistic physician—the human body: as practical magic.

In my definition, *practical magic* is the ability to take unseen forces in our world—like thoughts, emotions, sensations, intuitions, and beyond—and embody them; it is giving the formless form. Like how a thought in your head—such as, *I want to buy a house*—one day translates into something tangible—an actual brick-and-mortar dwelling that you and the rest of your material belongings occupy; or how unresolved emotional stress with your boss at work becomes tension in the muscles of your neck. In my mind, that's a kind of magic.

And it's practical because it pertains to your everyday life. Your thoughts, feelings, and impressions are ultimately expressed in what you choose to eat, how you choose to spend your time, with whom you choose to spend it, etc. You are the magician who gets to choose both the formless and its form! Sometimes, your choices on the outside reflect your true nature on the inside, but that's not always the case. You might not always feel congruent or balanced in how you are living—which creates a sense of dis-ease. Your fullest expression of health is nothing less than your fullest expression of self.

Which leads us to back to Rebecca and her ability to read your birth chart to glean the cosmos within. Whether her client is a stay-at-home mom or a corporate professional, Rebecca reminds

everyone of what makes them unique, from the pattern of their fingerprints to the blueprint of their soul. Reading their stars to align them with their greater wisdom, she motivates them to move outside of their comfort zones, to live the most expansive versions of their lives.

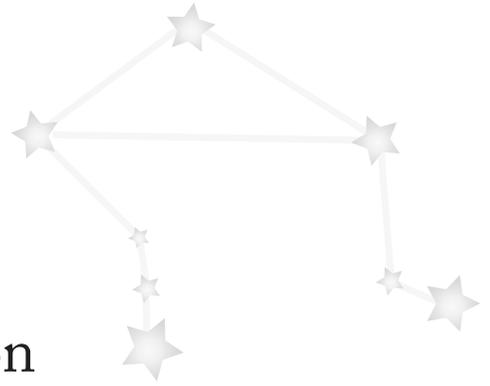
For example, she might guide a client who is a Taurus to broaden his self-expression, which will not only help him align with his true nature but also help resolve tension in his neck. I, similarly, would empower a patient who has chronic neck tension with a greater understanding of her body and its connection to her mind, emotions, and spirit; how her intangible thoughts, feelings, and stories around self-expression (which is represented both physically and metaphysically by the neck) may result in tangible muscle tension and stress. And then I would teach her practical tools—movement, breath, nutrition, meditation, and more—to address it.

So while Rebecca and I might outwardly seem like an unorthodox pair (or the beginning of a joke about a doctor and an astrologer walking into a bar . . .), we both approach our personal and professional lives with the ingrained belief that everything is within, that your body contains a universe of wisdom that may serve as a key to your well-being—if you let it.

Of course, we weren't aware of this conceptual overlap until we met, which didn't happen that evening at the conference. Yes, that first night I saw her, I just knew that we were going to meet one day and have a profound relationship. But it needed to happen at the right time. And so I just sat and smiled during her talk, woke up the next day inspired to outline this book . . . and then waited about six months until it turned out that the office space I was renting in a healing center was directly next to hers. Talk about our stars aligning!

And the rest is, well, this book. A book about your body and the stars. A fresh perspective that allows you to awaken and rise to new possibilities, beyond the constraints of who you currently imagine you are or should be . . . along with practical tools to help you live the fullest, richest, most well life possible. Isn't it time for you to reclaim your full self? To be your own expert on you? So, if you feel that for as happy and healthy as you are, there is still more—and you want to take hands-on responsibility for it—then we invite you to explore this next chapter of your story. A story of heaven and earth, spirit and matter, and you, the individual who resides in between.

—Dr. Stephanie



Introduction

This is not an astrology book, nor an anatomy one. Rather, it is a wellness guide that uses the stars as its foundation instead of a specific diet or exercise routine. There are many ways to be healthy and feel well. And fortunately, our contemporary focus is beginning to shift toward holistic wellness as a new model of health. Make no mistake—we believe the traditional Western medical system, while it has its flaws, does a good job. But it focuses on acute care and disease diagnosis and management—not health optimization and wellness.

Wellness is more encompassing. It is not just of the body, but also of the mind, emotions, and spirit. When we enter into these intangible realms, though, many wellness modalities become hard to prove with our current scientific yardsticks and measures—after all, assessing one’s emotional or mental well-being is more nebulous than examining X-rays for broken bones. But one reason holistic modalities are now more mainstream than alternative is that most people who experience nutrition, yoga, acupuncture, and the like do not require any further proof than the way they feel. For most of us, the proof is in our personal health, experience, and understanding.

This book presents another way to access all your tangible and intangible bits and pieces, and to help them start functioning as a unified whole. On first glimpse, a methodology that uses the zodiac

for wellness may seem a bit out there, but we're just reclaiming an ancient and acknowledged belief system—one that is an underpinning of modern medicine and science, regardless of any misconceptions or controversy. As the scientific historian Dr. David Lindberg reminds us, “If we wish to do justice to the historical enterprise, we must take the past for what it was. . . . We must respect the way earlier generations approached nature, acknowledging that although it may differ from the modern way, it is nonetheless of interest because it is part of our intellectual ancestry.”¹ So, in using this book, we are asking you to not only take increased responsibility for your well-being, but also to try a new way of doing it—one that will expand, engage, and inspire your understanding of health and wellness unlike before.

The story of the stars presents powerful principles that enable you to achieve your fullest expression of wellness, which is your fullest expression of self. If you put your attention toward these principles in relationship to your body, you will begin to realize that you are so much more than meets the eye. Sure, you will feel better and more comfortable in your own skin, but the true gift of the book is that it can help guide you to live the best version of yourself at *all* levels—body, mind, and spirit. In so doing, you will realize a life that is more textured—with a radiant body, inspiring thoughts, expanded emotions, and trustworthy intuition. And ultimately your personal microcosm will reconnect to the macrocosm to which you naturally belong.

About the Book

Your Body and the Stars uses the zodiac as a map of your physical form and, from head to feet, symbolizes your connection to the cosmos. It helps you reclaim your body and contextualize it into your greater whole and—as you do—reclaim aspects of yourself that may have been lost or forgotten. We simply bridge their healing connection.

The first chapter, “As Above, So Below,” lays the foundation for the connection. We introduce the stars in context to both astrology and your body. Then each of the next twelve chapters is devoted to a specific region of the body and its associated zodiac sign, going into more informative detail regarding your body's interrelationship with the stars. The body region (head, chest, knees) sets the stage for each chapter, with a focus on the musculoskeletal anatomy, as the bones, joints, and muscles tend to be the parts that are the most relatable and easily accessed. We then

connect the body to the astrological spirit or character of the zodiac sign, which is presented via the sign's theme, and we explain the theme in order to introduce its universal characteristics while highlighting its personal relevance for you.

The “Lessons” sections in each chapter are intended to introduce you to mind-spirit considerations that might accompany your body's symptoms. They are not for self-diagnosis, nor do they imply that certain dates or traits will result in certain symptoms. Rather, they outline possible connections between the zodiac signs and physical manifestations that are more complex than presented here. Again, the emphasis is on musculoskeletal manifestations (with a glimpse of some others).



To make the material not only relevant but also practical, we then offer self-study questions to help elucidate how the signs' themes currently live within you (so be honest and nonjudgmental in your observations), as well as movement recommendations to guide you in bringing the themes to physical life. The recommended exercises are practical for most levels of experience and culled from a variety of modalities: stretching and strengthening exercises, yoga, Pilates, and beyond. As we are unable to include images for every exercise, we encourage you to ask your local movement instructors or go online to find visual instructions that accompany our written ones.

These exercises are intended to address a broad audience, with modifications to help you tailor them to your level. That said, we encourage you to further modify them to the needs of your body (for example, increasing the number of repetitions, decreasing the length of a hold, using supportive yoga blocks and cushions). Please do so with diligence, self-awareness, and proper alignment, for your greatest safety. It is often easier to perform an advanced exercise improperly than a basic one properly.

You will notice that the twelve zodiac-body chapters alternate in their use of gender-specific nouns and pronouns (*he* and *she*). This usage is in accordance with the polarity of the star sign discussed. *Polarities* are dualities—yin and yang, feminine and masculine, negative and positive—that represent mutual understanding. The terms are not used pejoratively and there is no relationship to gender. For instance, fire signs like Aries are considered more yang and share certain traits like action and extroversion; as it is a masculine sign, the pronoun used in the chapter is *he*. Taurus, on the other hand, is a feminine sign so the pronoun used to describe its energy is *she*. While not the norm, we have adopted this approach to help maintain the integrity of each sign.

The book concludes with appendixes that offer useful references: a chart with examples of the different manifestations related to the zodiac-body connection, a body-of-the-stars body scan, and a reference for skeletal structures and regions of the body. In writing this book we have merely introduced the vast realms of astrology and anatomy and their healing connection; the goal of these appendixes is to enable you to keep learning and experiencing on your own.

How to Use This Book

We believe that experience is the master teacher. Many readers of astrology or anatomy books tend to read only the chapter that they believe pertains to them (for example, the Virgo sun sign reads about the Virgo and the knee surgeon reads about the knee). However, we encourage you to experience every chapter of this book, because every body region and sign lives within you! You might be a Virgo by birth, but you still have the hands of the Twins (Gemini) and the heart of a Lion (Leo). Every day the different signs express themselves differently through you.

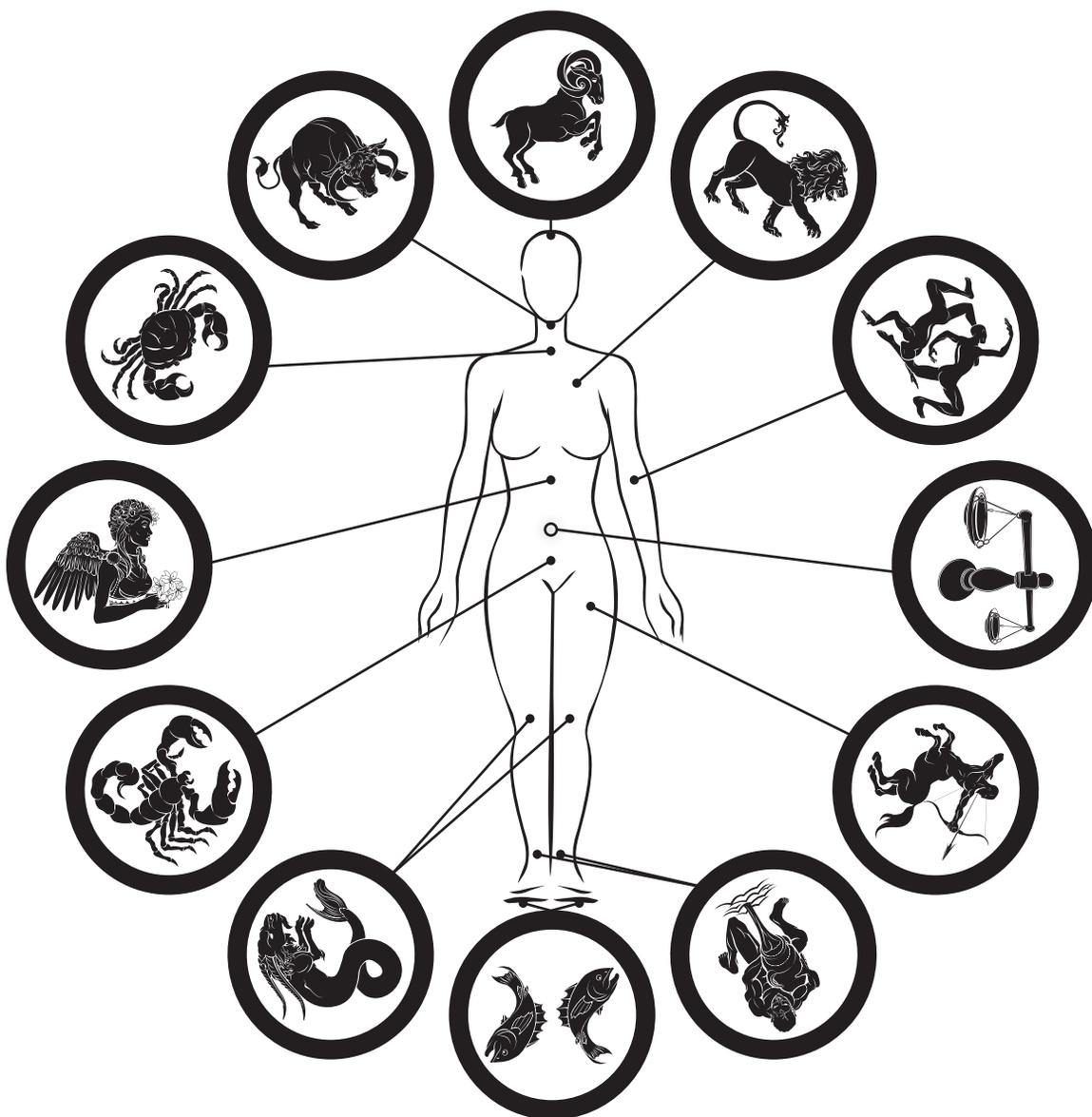
When a body region is in need of attention due to extrinsic pain or intrinsic imbalance, the sign's susceptibilities also come to the forefront; effectively, both body and sign are in need of attention and balance with the rest of you. However, you certainly do not have to wait until a part of you feels out of whack in order to read about it. In fact, we encourage you to read about different body regions in order to optimize their health if you are drawn to do so. In other words, we encourage you to read the chapters in the order that resonates with you. In this way, the book may be used as a custom-tailored body scan and wellness reference to use time and time again.

You can begin your scan by choosing a chapter based on either its body region or its zodiac sign. Choose the region that interests you the most. Perhaps it is correlated with your sun sign, or it is an area you recently read about in a fitness magazine, or it is an area where you feel pain. For example, if you are a runner who wants to know more about your knees, flip to chapter 11, "Knees of the Seagoat." Approach the chapter with an open mind, with questions like *What are my knees, really? What role do they play in my life? What can I learn from them?* Then, flip to the body regions above and below—in this case the "Hips of the Centaur" and "Ankles of the Water Bearer"—to learn about connected body parts that may be associated with your knee pain.

This book is also about your connection to the stars, the ancient wisdom they represent, and how you can harness their wisdom through your physical form. So you

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can also choose to begin with a chapter based on your sun (birth), moon, or rising sign, or on one of the signs' themes that you wish to further embody. For example, if you are a Pisces sun sign who wants to know more about your nature and how to best express it, turn to chapter 13, "Feet of the Fish." While reading, ask questions like



How do I live the nature of the Fish? What lessons does this sign present for me? and How do my feet embody this part of my nature?

As you read from your chosen vantage point, keep an eye out for what it means to you. Which characteristics are feeling strong and robust? Which could be better developed? Be as honest with yourself as possible to get the greatest benefits from the book.

Everyone has strengths and susceptibilities, neither of which is good or bad. Overly strong has its fair share of problems (like muscle strain, bullish behavior), as does being overly susceptible (like shoulder dislocation, lack of confidence). You need a balance of both to be healthy. You need to stand strong *and* sway in the wind, like the proverbial reed that outlasted the oak tree in a storm because it was able to bend and not break. Jot down your strengths and susceptibilities as they become more apparent through what you read.

Need help choosing which characteristics to nurture? Which to bring into a better balance? When reading, note the descriptions of body regions and star sign characteristics that resonate with you the most—those that instantly stand out as big yeses or nos. A strong reaction either way indicates aspects that need greater consideration. Over time, your practice will change as you are called to embody different traits. They all live within you and, at different times in your life, will need to be expressed in different ways. So feel free to return to each chapter for reference throughout your life. Each reading will reveal something new.

Most importantly, this book is intended to take you on a journey through the cosmos as it lives both around and within you. Proceed, then, with a sense of exploration as befits an astronaut, along with an open imagination about how this wellness guide can best serve you. Our universe, galaxy, solar system, planet, and bodies are nothing if not magical, and accessing them is practical magic at its best.

Note

1. David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2–3.